

An analysis of Indian domestic life through Kamala Markanday's Novel "Nectar in a Sieve"

Dr. Swati Chauhan

Associate Professor, Department of English, FMeH, MRIIRS, Faridabad, India

Abstract— *After the Second World War, the Indian English novelists made remarkable contribution in the field of English Fiction. The Indian English fiction does not inspire readers to escape to the world of imagination as it is a systematic study of Indian culture and civilization. After all the Indian English novelists also had their own experiences and aspirations. Due to their minute sense of observation they understood the problems of Indian masses as a whole. In the world of Indian English novel, Kamala Markanday has an eminent place. After published her first novel 'Nectar in a sieve' in 1954, she achieved great success and fame. In her first novel- in Nectar in a sieve, novelist presents a family (a picture of Indian domestic life) that suffers great poverty in life. Because of this poverty they faced the day of hunger, disease and at last death. In this novel, novelist describes some evils in Indian domestic life- such as- big and joined families, reckless way of earning and chiefly un-education. These are the main demerits in India by which a man have to suffer. As, Tagore understood the social and economic problems of India and suggested the vision of idealism to solve them.*

Keywords— *Kamala Markanday, Novel, Nectar in a Sieve, English Fiction.*

After the Second World War, the Indian English novelists made remarkable contribution in the field of English Fiction. It is an accepted fact that the Indian novel has grown in bulk and variety after the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's wife* (1864). It is true that some novelists followed certain definite patterns and even imitated Fielding, Henry, Dickens, Meredith, Thackeray, Hardy etc. It is also an accepted fact that some Indian writers made experiments in form and techniques and enhance Indian English novel, that become a class itself. These Indian writers are Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markanday etc. have been recognized by foreign writers like E.M. Forster and Graham Greene. Their originality of form and content has been appreciated by most of the scholars all over the world. Many British critics asserted in their critical

views that the people of the west should study the Indian novels if they want to understand social and political powers of India. The Indian English fiction does not inspire readers to escape to the world of imagination as it is a systematic study of Indian culture and civilization. After all the Indian English novelists also had their own experiences and aspirations. Due to their minute sense of observation they understood the problems of Indian masses as a whole.

After independence they noticed a lot of changes in various parts of the country and as a result the western academic world got talented novelists. Tagore's *Gitanjali* had won the Nobel Prize in 1913 and as a result the Indian novels of above mentioned writers became popular outside India. Many Indian novels were translated in different languages of the world. Vankatesh Kulkarni, Nayantara Sehgal, Arun Joshi, Manohar Malgonkar, Anita Desai, Chaman Nahal, Khushwant Singh, V.A. Sahane, Gopal Gandhi, Balraj Khanna etc. have been admired for their contribution to Indian English novel. It is not an exaggeration of fact if the Indian English novelists of 20th century are put in the category of Richardson, Henry Fielding, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Meredith, Thackeray, Joseph Conrad, Maupassant, Somerset Maugham, E.M. Forster etc. After Independence, the Indian writer became conscious of their mental strength and sense of liberty and as a result the Indian English novels won universal applause.

In the world of Indian English novel, Kamala Markanday has an eminent place. Time has changed and so has the status of women in society. This is also reflected by the contribution of women in literature. Female writers have continued to contribute in literature. Women writers have a humanizing and cathartic effect on the readers. We can find resilient accounts of feminine anger, struggle and self assertion to retrieve the female identity. Twenty first century women write to participate in enduring debates like never before. They have evolved from the past and are speculating the future. They write to raise their voice by challenging questions and proposing answers. They write not only to explore the world and its issues but also to understand themselves. On one hand, they address the

question of sexuality, relationship, love, private or secret experience and on the other hand they discuss politics, disparities and economic realities. As, after published the first novel of Kamala Markanday, 'Nectar in a sieve' in 1954, she achieved great success and fame. Krishna Rao rightly says, "the perspective direction of her creative sensibility endows her novels with a certain representative character that marks them out as a significant entity in Indo-Anglian fiction".(1)

In all her novels-'Nectar in a sieve', 'Some Inner Fury', 'A Silence of Desire', 'Possession', 'A Handful of Rice', 'The Coffin Dome', 'Two virgins', 'The golden honeycomb', 'Pleasure city', we find Indianness and her vision of life in every shape Markanday deals both sides of life: dark and colourful. In her first novel- in Nectar in a sieve, novelist presents a family (a picture of Indian domestic life) that suffers great poverty in life. Because of this poverty they faced the day of hunger, disease and at last death. In this novel, novelist describes some evils in Indian domestic life- such as- big and joined families, reckless way of earning and chiefly un-education. These are the main demerits in India by which a man have to suffer.

As, Tagore understood the social and economic problems of India and suggested the vision of idealism to solve them. Let Indians establish harmonious relations with the people of the world so that they may make progress. He asserted: "We in India are fortunate in not having the chance to give expression to the best in us in creating intimate relations with the powerful people of the world. The bond between the nations today is made of the links of mutual menace its strength depending upon the force of panic, and leading to an enormous waste of resources in a competition of brow beating and bluff. Some great voice is waiting to be heard which will usher in the sacred light of truth in the dark region of the nightmare of politics."(2)

"The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husbands and wives are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations of freedom, security and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society."

Catechism of Catholic Church

In his convocation address at Gurukul Kangri Hardwar R.N.Tagore asserted the need of knowledge for India as a whole. He was sad at heart as most of the countrymen did

not know anything about real India. He was disappointed to see why the people fail to cultivate the desire for knowledge? Why do they soar into the thin air of academic expectation? It is only through knowledge that the people can understand the meaning of truth and love. He said: "The love of man has its own hunger for knowing. Even if we lack this concerning our fellow beings in India, except in our political protestations, at least love of knowledge for its own sake could have brought us close to each other. But there also we have failed and suffered. For weakness of knowledge is the foundation of weakness of power. Until India becomes fully distinct in our mind, we can never gain her in truth; and where truth is imperfect, love can never have its full sway."(3)

Similarly Kamala Markanday has portrayed the Indian social life through Rukmani and Nathan, the two main character of Nectar in a Sieve. In the beginning Rukmani Nathan leads a happy life. Though, Rukmani and Nathan were poor, yet their life was blessed with peace and joy: "my heart sang and my feet were light as I went about my work, getting up a sunrise and going to sleep content".(4) Their early part of married life was full of love and affection. There was food in plenty for two people and they ate well. "What patience indeed my husband must have had to put up with me uncomplainingly during those early days of our married lives" not one cross word or impatient look, and praise for whatever small success I achieved".(5)

A child, Ira comes in their family, when she was seven, Rukmani gives birth son Arjun, and later four more sons: Thambi, Murugan, Raja and Salvan. After that both Rukmani and Nathan try to make a harmony, love and peace, though they were proceeding towards chill penury. Their domestic life was in a web of drought and flood.

Now children grew up and Nathan's financial condition became bad to worse. The prices of necessary things soar up because of industrialization in village. That was an another cause of Nathan's problems and his worse condition. Ira's marriage was a further, blow to the economic condition of the family. "They were old enough to understand, but the others, who weren't burst into tease too, for by now. They were cramped and out of humour with sitting.... And the new seasons's harvesting lay outside ungathered and rotting."(6)

Nathan's family become under debt, so his first son Arjun go to the tennary and his second son Thambi also join him. They prove good sons and gives their parent a fair share of their earnings. Rukmani says "with their money we began once again to live well.....I stored away half bag to rice, two measures of dhal and nearly a pound of chillies".(7)

Arjun and Thambi left home for Ceylon. In this way, one by one the sons left home for employment. Once again Rukmani and Nathan came at the brink of starvation. Rukmani says, "Hope, and fear twin forces that tugged at us first in one direction and then in another and which was the stronger no one could say of the latter we never spoke, but it was always with us. Fear; constant companion of the peasant. Hunger, ever at hand to jog his elbow should he relax. Despair, ready to engulf him should he falter. Fear; fear of the dark future; fear of the sharpness of hunger; fear of the blackness of death".(8)

The old couple could not bid farewell to domestic life. Emotionally they are attached to their sons and daughter, who had established now in their own ways. So, Nathan and Rukmani decides to go Murugan, thinking that he would give them shelter. After a long and tiring journey, they reached in city but they lost their luggage and could not find their son. Now Nathan died; Rukmani with the help of an orphan, Pauli came to Salvan and Ira.

In the hour of misfortune and sorrow, Rukmani's own sons could not support, on the contrary an orphan boy Pauli, her adopted son discharged all the duties of a real son at the time of Nathan's funeral. "In the short time he (Pauli) had spent with us we had come to be curiously dependent on the boy, respecting his independent spirit as much as his considerable knowledge of the city and its many kinds of people".(9)

Nathan and Rukmani played many role in their domestic life as" they were wife and husband; parents; head of the family. So they have to bear a lot of pains and pleasures of Indian domestic life.

Thus, Markanday suggestively speaks about domestic life. She highlights the evils of Indian domestic life by her novel "Nectar in a Sieve".

[9] Ibid, P.p.177-178.

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- [3] Ibid, P.720.
- [4] *Nectar in a Sieve* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing house, 1983), P.7.
- [5] Ibid, P.8.
- [6] Ibid, P.40.
- [7] Ibid, P.52.
- [8] Ibid, P.79.